

## Active Plan Management

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Too many times a good plan to manage traffic during a construction project fails to do the job—primarily because the plan was turned over to the motorist to carry out. The user of the system wasn't informed of how the plan was intended to work or how to use it; there was no real coordination between the operation of various elements of the overall plan; there was no active monitoring of how the plan was working; and there were no means to quickly modify the plan to meet changing traffic patterns. In short, no one was making the plan happen—seeing that the various pieces were in place when needed, that each element was doing the job intended, and that the plan was being adjusted as needed.

The motorist is a key player in the successful operation of any traffic management plan. In most cases, the motorist will be called upon to make voluntary changes in existing travel patterns—whether it is to modify modes, times, or routes of travel—to accommodate the planned construction. The motorist needs to be convinced that changing will be in his best interest. To do this, he needs to be informed of the alternatives available and the kind of service each will provide to him. This means that a marketing/public information effort must be a part of any traffic management plan. And it needs to begin before the freeway is ripped up—so the motorist has time to shift those travel patterns.

If the traffic management plan is to succeed, those involved in the construction project—agency and contractor personnel alike—must understand that the movement of traffic is an important part of the project. It is essential that the contract plans and specifications call for those things that are essential to the traffic management plan—order of work, times during which lane closures are prohibited, provision of officers and flagmen to expedite traffic flows, signing, and operation of roadways. Contract documents should clearly establish that the contractor will be required to do certain things to facilitate the movement of traffic, and should include penalty clauses for failure to do so. Project personnel then need to enforce those provisions. Operation of the plan should be monitored daily, and adjustments should be made to improve traffic flows.

Putting the plan into effect will call for the cooperation and coordinated effort of a number of players—enforcement agencies, traffic and transportation organizations, contractor personnel, and others, such as transit service providers and major

employers. Procedures, working relationships, and roles of each in making the plan work need to be established before the plan is carried out; lines of communication with each need to be in place.

Project managers need to give special attention to communication with the public throughout the life of the plan. As the construction project progresses, varying patterns will be called for; in fact, day-to-day changes are likely to be common. Information needs to be up to date, and it must be communicated to the public in a timely manner. Communication systems to get information to drivers in their vehicles need to be in place—changeable message signs, highway advisory radio, and information links with commercial radio stations have all been used successfully. Bear in mind that the more a driver knows about what is going on and what steps he can take to avoid problems, the better the chance that the driver will modify travel patterns and that the plan will be a success.

The development of a good traffic management plan is important—but its success or failure will depend on the operation of the plan. Planners can't afford to sit back and hope it will work—they need to manage the plan to make sure it does the job.